Approved for Release: 2021/01/27 C00031043

A.D Book Files

14/6/005

[redacted]

IBSTONE HOUSE: IBSTONE:
NEAR HIGH WYCOMBE: BUCKS.

February 22, 1964.

My dear Allen,

My review has now gone to the Sunday Telegraph and I hope it won't displease you. I enjoyed the book very much, though I was puzzled by the way that you don't seem to have been posted on English cases with perfect accuracy. Houghton did not attract the attention of any security organisation by his extravagance and his investments in real estate or anything else. He is said to have been detected in the course of a dragnet investigation into the possible writers of an anti-Semitic anonymous letter; an alternative version being that a defector drew attention to the presence of a spy in his area on his level. Vassall's extravagance was not noticed, and a good part of the Tribunal was taken up by frenzied attempts of our Attorney-General (a moron of the first water) to prove that our security organisations should not and did not notice it.

I have a strong suspicion that you have read the Vassall Report and not the volume of evidence etc. published by His Majesty's Stationery Office. The two don't jibe too well. Radcliffe is an over-rated talent and he fell down over this. and the Law Officers of the Crown were pitiable. I think someone had a hope that if they slapped down the press over the Vassall affair it would be muzzled over the Profumo case. It wasn't, and the whole thing just goes to show that one can't be too clever.

I have the oddest recollection, and an unpleasant one, of Mildred Harnack Fish. She turned up with an introduction from an English writer now dead, at my flat in Orchard Court, and gravely told me that Hitler adored my books. She was empowered to tell me so, and bore the message gladly, because she and her husband were trying to civilise the Nazi state by working for it in the cultural sphere. She went on to say that every book I had written would be published in a beautiful German translation if I would only sign a declaration that I had no Jewish blood in me. At which I asked her to go. She went on, telling me the advantages I would secure if I did this little, little thing, even telling me that if I didn't people might think I had Jewish blood. I explained that I certainly hadn't but that I would rather die than do such a thing as sign a declaration to curry favour with Hitler, and I threw her out of the front door, and as I did so, I made the uncharitable

Approved for Release
Date OCT 1992
002971

Approved for Release: 2021/01/27 C00031043

Approved for Release: 2021/01/27 C00031043

remark, "I hope Hitler does to you the worst thing he ever did to a Jew."

In 1949 I was in Hamburg with Henry and Dorothy Thompson and someone brought a book of anti-Nazi martyrs to the hotel, and I opened it at a page where there was the blond and vague face of Mildred Harnack Fish beside a text which showed that Hitler had done that very thing! I felt considerable remorse, until an ex-Communist said to me, "Let me suggest to you, dear Rebecca, that she was not merely disguising her real convictions when she came to England on this mission. She was also engaged in a typical Communist attempt to tie bricks round the necks of all conspicuous anti-Communists."

Not a nice story, but this is not a nice age.

All good wishes, and may we meet some time soon,

Yours ever,

Rebecca West

Approved for Release: 2021/01/27 C00031043